

April 2006

People Profile: Anna L. Creech, MLS

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Recommended Citation

Editor (2006) "People Profile: Anna L. Creech, MLS," *Against the Grain*: Vol. 18: Iss. 2, Article 20.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7771/2380-176X.4649>

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Managing electronic resources has brought about some commercial solutions such as journal A-Z lists, OpenURL, and ERM, but the question that plagues most librarians is staffing and workflow. The kind of technical knowledge needed to manage electronic resources is different from that needed to manage print resources. In most cases we have to do it with the same staff that has been faithfully processing our print journals for years. One person can manage a handful of online journals, but eventually this must be folded into the departmental workflow along with print.

While the functions of managing online journals are similar to print, the process is not. For example, online journals do not arrive via the mailroom. When a print issue is received, there is a system for updating holdings and getting it on the shelf to provide access for users. Similarly, when access to an online journal is activated, there is a process for providing access for users through links in the catalog or A-Z list or OpenURL link resolver. The end result is the same for both, but the way it is done is entirely different.

Professional literature in the field is scattered with articles and survey reports about workflow changes made at various libraries. Zhang and Haslam² offer a brief description of the changes made at the University of Nevada-Reno in their 2005 article that presents options that may be available to larger university libraries. They had the benefit of flexible budgets and staffing. These benefits allowed them to drop tasks associated with print journals, train their staff on tools for managing electronic resources, and add staff positions in electronic resource management where needed.

In 2002, Duranceau and Hepfer³ surveyed libraries to find out how they organized staff activities involving the management of electronic resources. Their survey results indicated that although libraries have increased staffing for electronic resources, they have not done so in proportion to the number of electronic resources acquired. In fact, most libraries are understaffed in this area if one were to look at the statistics alone. Their survey found that electronic collections grew 1,100 percent in five years, but the staff time devoted to those collections grew only 614 percent. Like UNV-R, most of these libraries have managed the increases by distributing the work among existing staff and training them for the additional technical expertise.

Re-designing workflow is not for the faint of heart. It is easy to look at what needs to be done and how a department workflow should be organized, but it is not so easy when one factors in the personality and skills of existing staff. Staff limitations can result in workarounds that may impact how effectively

against the grain people profile

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Anna L. Creech, MLS

BORN & LIVED: Born in Lexington (KY); lived in Iowa, Ohio, Virginia, Kentucky, and Washington.

EARLY LIFE: Reading books, watching sci-fi, and avoiding bullies.

Family: Two cats named Alex & Pesh.

Education: BA Mathematics, Eastern Mennonite University; MS Library & Information Science, University of Kentucky.

FIRST JOB: Serials/Database Cataloger, Eastern Kentucky University.

PROFESSIONAL CAREER AND ACTIVITIES: Focusing on serials & electronic resources; very active in NASIG.

IN MY SPARE TIME I LIKE TO: Use a GPS receiver and my wits to find containers other people have hidden in a game called Geocaching.

FAVORITE BOOKS: Anything by Agatha Christie; Anne McCaffrey's *Pern Series*; *Walking Home* by Kelly Winters.

PET PEEVES/WHAT MAKES ME MAD: Injustices of any size; leaving the toilet lid up; Bill O'Reilly.

PHILOSOPHY: Do no harm through action or inaction.

MOST MEANINGFUL CAREER ACHIEVEMENT: Writing for *Against the Grain*. Cheesey, but true.

GOAL I HOPE TO ACHIEVE FIVE YEARS FROM NOW: Deciding if I want tenure or a new job.

HOW/WHERE DO I SEE THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS: I see more dynamic connections between library catalogs and publisher data. Web/Library 2.0 tools and gadgets will be used to create a social community around library resources. Users will be driving the demand for these tools and gadgets, and the industry will be providing them for libraries to implement. 🐼

electronic resources are delivered to users. While parallels can be drawn between print and electronic management, serials librarians must step outside of the box in order to fully address the needs of online journals.

For the most part, print serials are stable creatures that require only a minimal amount of care. On the other hand, their electronic counterparts constantly demand attention. We use a combination of link checkers, publisher notifications, and user feedback to alert us when there are connection problems. An array of spreadsheets, homegrown databases, and manila folders help us keep track of payments and licenses. Vendor-created ERM tools have cropped up in the past few years to replace and improve homegrown solutions, but they are expensive and geared towards large collections.

One workflow concern that gets brought up regularly is the process of receiving issues. Some serials departments have simply transferred the print check in process to the online world by regularly looking to see if new issues have been posted and updating their catalog records accordingly. This is a very intensive process with limited benefit to

users. Either the journal issue is there or it is not. Many medium to large libraries have outsourced this aspect by making arrangements with a vendor to maintain links and update available dates as they receive that information from the publishers.

Another impact on workflow has been the merging of the serials librarian with the electronic resources or systems librarian. Traditionally, the serials librarian was concerned with print only and the electronic resource or systems librarian was concerned with electronic only. This delineation was simpler when a resource came in only one format, but it became less clear when publishers started providing free online access with print. Suddenly the serials librarian had to communicate with the electronic resources librarian about which journals have online access or not, and the lines between respective departments has become a blur. In many libraries, elements of both jobs were merged together into one serials and electronic resources librarian who coordinates the acquisition, administration, and evaluation of serial publications, regardless of format. Each library

continued on page 34